Narratives about Late Byzantium center on decline and loss. Narratives about Late Byzantine rural communities emphasize their inability to cope with the economic, political and demographic crises of 13th-15th centuries. They are thus envisioned as static and powerless groups, spending their time suffering patiently, anticipating their demise and fall!

Bringing together archaeological and textual data, Dr. Fotini Kondyli retells the story of two islands in the Northern Aegean, Lemnos and Thasos, and reintroduces their Late Byzantine inhabitants, elite and non-elite, as resilient groups and as agents of action and change. In doing so, she focuses on rural communities' socio-economic mechanisms against crises and points to their remarkable ability to adapt and even occasionally benefit from new social and demographic conditions. She also pays particular attention to processes of place-making and community building that brought people together and enhanced a sense of belonging and collectiveness, all key ingredients of resilient groups.

The lecture is sponsored by: Program in Mediterranean Archaeology; Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies Department; History Department